

relaxed. Then a little colour crept into her face and a sparkle into her eyes.

"Yes," said Jefferson, though nobody had spoken, "it was a daring thing. More, in fact, than I would have done. My partner has the cleanest kind of real hard sand in him."

He turned to Muriel with a little deprecatory gesture. "I had more at stake than he had—and I was afraid that night."

Jacinta sat still a while, a trifle flushed in face, for the scene Jefferson had very vaguely pictured had stirred her to the depths. The man whom she had sent forth had done more than she would ever have asked of him, and the gallantry of the action brought a dimness to her eyes. Then she remembered that it was not done recklessly, for he had, it seemed, decided calmly, which must have made it inexpressibly harder. There were, she could imagine, circumstances in which a man might more or less willingly risk his life, but the risk Austin had taken was horrible, and he stood to gain nothing when he quietly recognised the responsibility he had taken upon himself. It was with an overwhelming sense of confusion she remembered the jibes she had flung at him concerning his discretion, and yet under it there was still the sense of pride. After all, it was to please her he had gone to Africa.

"Well," said Jefferson quietly, "you are pleased with him?"

Jacinta met his gaze unwaveringly, and her voice had a little thrill in it.

"Does it matter in the least whether I am pleased or not?" she said. "Still, since you ask, I scarcely think I have heard of anything that would surpass what he did that night."